

YOUR WEEK IN CHINA'S CAPITAL

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China's Child Abandonment Problem

Two babies abandoned this month in a toilet and a forest are signs of a larger issue. **Page 4**



Beloved Toothpaste Brand Tumbles

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New Drugs Approved Faster

China is planning to speed up its process of approving and importing innovative drugs.

Clinical trials will be held in the country simultaneously with overseas trials. **Page 2**

Details About the Holiday's Military Parade Emerge

BY SUNNY ZHANG

Forty-nine countries have confirmed their plans to attend China's military parade on Sep. 3.

The news, announced by Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Zhang Ming, came as part of an Aug. 25 press conference for the State Council Information Office.

The parade's Vice Director Qu Rui said the participation of foreign military processions and representatives would make this parade different from China's usual military festivities. Russia, Cuba, Egypt, Kazakhstan and Mexico were among the 11 countries that promised to send military processions as of press time.

Six countries, including Afghanistan and Venezuela, said they would send representatives, a spokesperson for the State Council announced.

The event's guest list includes current leaders and foreign soldiers, as well as former politicians and veterans. Among them are former Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama and Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Zhang said more than 100 veterans from 15 countries would attend the event in person or through a selected family representative. Among them are members of the first American Volunteer Group, better known as the "Flying Tigers," the Soviet Army and Japanese

veterans who served in the Eighth Route Army.

There are also family dependents of those who offered help to Chinese citizens during the Nanking Massacre, including front line surgeon Henry Norman Bethune, known in China as Bai Qiuen.

Chinese veterans of the war are also being invited, including many who served under the former Kuomintang government, China Military Online reported. Other notable new elements include the presence of a female PLA honor guard and processions led by generals. ■

(Sunny Zhang is an intern at Beijing Today.)

CHINESE STOCK INDEXES

SSE (Shanghai)

Close	Change	YTD
3,048.09	▲120.80 (4.13%)	-6.02%

SZSE (Shenzhen)

Close	Change	YTD
1,739.92	▲44.16 (2.60%)	+23.14%

HSI (Hong Kong)

Close	Change	YTD
21,674.15	▲593.76 (2.82%)	-5.91%

Accurate to market close on August 28, 2015



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Photo by CFP

China to Speed up New Drug Approval Process

BY YANG XIN

The State Council plans to address China's unusually lengthy drug approval process.

In "Opinions Concerning the Reform of the Review and Approval System for Drugs and Medical Devices" released on Aug. 18, the country's chief administrative authority said it would accelerate the review and approval of innovative drugs, including those targeting AIDS, malignant tumors, major infectious diseases and rare illnesses.

The review and approval process for new drugs normally lasts for 18 months, according to *People's Daily*. In the case of generic drugs, that process may be prolonged to six or seven years.

"A special review and approval team will be set up for innovative drugs only," said Wu Zhen, vice minister of the China

Food and Drug Administration (CFDA).

The country is also loosening its belt on clinical trial regulations for newly developed drugs. In the past, multinational pharmaceutical companies often had to wait years to bring new treatments to China. Drugs produced abroad can only be imported into China after they have been approved and marketed in another country.

Under the new process, drugs will be able to be imported for clinical trials in China simultaneously with overseas trials. Multinationals will also be allowed to use the data collected in the clinical process when applying to bring their drugs into China.

"Our attitude is very clear: we welcome innovative drugs to China. The sooner the better," Wu Zhen said in an interview with Bloomberg.

The guideline is expected to rectify China's notorious drug pricing system. Foreign drug-makers can apply to expedite approval for urgently needed new drugs if they promise to set prices no higher than in the originating country or comparable markets.

Experts said that by controlling the price-setting process, the final price of most imported drugs should be more reasonable.

But things are not always so simple.

"Multiple departments will have to work together to rectify drug pricing procedures," said Wu Zhen.

Dr. Wu Xiaobing, leader of a drug research team targeting rare diseases at Beijing Yizhuang Biomedical Park, said the guideline is only the first step.

"The US created green-light channels to speed up the approval of drugs for rare diseases. China has been relying too heavily on administrative decisions and ignoring the realistic demands. I'm concerned about how the CFDA will implement these measures," Wu said. ■

Map of City's Hazardous Chemical Holders Released

BY YANG XIN



Photo by CRI

There are 2,536 businesses in Beijing that are handling significant amounts of hazardous chemicals such as ammonia, methane and chlorine, according to a nationwide investigation of the storage of dangerous chemicals and explosives.

The majority of the companies are scattered across the suburban districts of Fangshan, Tongzhou and Daxing, the *Beijing Times* reported on Aug. 19.

Forty-nine of the businesses are manufacturers responsible for producing toxic chemicals, of which 35 are operational, according to the Beijing Administration of Work Safety.

Another 2,487 companies play the role of intermediaries, including 33 oil warehouses, 1,030 gas stations, 161 gas operators, 64 highly toxic chemical management companies and 1,197 businesses dealing with hazardous chemicals.

Among the 2,487 hazardous chemical distributors and traders, 85 companies are identified as possessing more than 30 types of severely hazardous chemicals.

The safety of oil and gas transmitting pipelines is a key issue in this new round of supervision. Illegal operations that put public safety at risk were discovered in multiple districts.

The *Beijing Times* reported that a

tiny restaurant named Yiguoman Lamb Spine Hot Pot in Chaoyang district was found sitting on burning lines and some residences in Daxing district were covering an urban gas pipeline that was laid in 2009.

"The capital's security officials have urged district and county authorities to effectively supervise local enterprises working with dangerous chemicals and to strengthen the safety management of key categories," Xinhua News Agency reported, citing Beijing Administration of Work Safety.

Qian Shan, vice head of the Beijing Administration of Work and Safety, promised swift action to improve the management of hazardous chemicals. The companies that failed our inspections will be ordered to suspend their operations, and their warehouses will be put under 24-hour surveillance," Qian said.

Beijing Administration of Work and Safety announced on Aug. 23 that the Beijing Work Safety Committee had issued a document that called for toughening checks on the management of hazardous chemicals and explosives.

"By mid-September, all the business units dealing with hazardous chemicals and fireworks manufacturers will be thoroughly inspected," it said. ■

Foul-Up Costs Gaokao Winner Admission to Tsinghua

BY YANG XIN

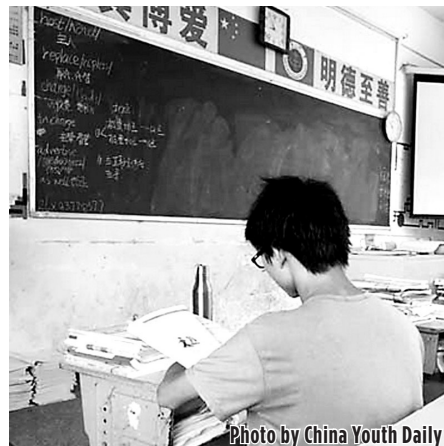


Photo by China Youth Daily

Aug. 21 is the cut-off date for college enrollment in Jiangxi province. It's also the day when Wang Xi's dream of going to Tsinghua University broke down, officially.

With 685 points, Wang was the top scorer on the 2015 National College Entrance Exam in the Guangfeng district of Shangrao, Jiangxi province. But the seemingly joyful news turned sour on July 18.

The Jiangxi Education Examination Authority announced the admission limit for Tsinghua University was 686 points. Only one point shy, Wang was rejected by the country's top-ranking school.

Wang has since opted to enroll at the Central University of Finance and Economics, his second choice school. The decision would be easier for him to bear if the university had not promised to enroll him previously.

"I consulted the university for several times when filling out my college application form. They promised to enroll me no matter what," Wang said.

"The document specifying the admission limit was too late," said the Jiangxi education authority. Tsinghua argued that even though its notice did not arrive before the cutoff date, it was still postmarked in time.

"A university's admission limit for a province is supposed to be released by local education authorities after discussion and confirmation with the university. The local authority needs to calculate and report the number of applicants for the university while the latter sets a limit to let in the right number of students," an editorial in the *Yangtze Evening Post* explained.

The 686-point limit was announced only after the school had promised to admit Wang.

"July 17 is the deadline for universities to settle the amount of students they want to recruit in our province. Tsinghua University never submitted any document to adjust its admission limit until the day after," said the Jiangxi Education and Examination Authority.

But the Jiangxi education authority is not without fault.

After denying Tsinghua University's application to alter its admission line, it accepted the university's request to enroll another two applicants who had the same score as Wang Xi simply because they filled out their college application forms with only one choice: Tsinghua. ■



Loose Controls Make Fake Health Certificates Easy to Acquire

BY DIAO DIAO

Babysitters, housekeepers and other on-site service providers in China are required to prove that they are healthy and not carrying any infectious disease. The proof of that – a health certificate – is mandatory for application.

But health certificates can be purchased test-free for only 200 yuan.

A woman carrying the HIV virus was recently caught with a fake certificate issued in Beijing when she applied

to work as a babysitter in Yiwu, Zhejiang province.

Different housekeeping agencies have different requirements for their health certificates. Some need a full blood work-up and Hepatitis B examination. Many don't.

An undercover reporter from *Beijing Youth Daily* visited the Physical Examination Center of Chaoyang District to request a certificate. After refusing to have her blood drawn, a

nurse told her she could still obtain a certificate for 200 yuan.

Certificates normally cost 76 yuan to obtain.

After waiting for 30 minutes, the reporter was issued a blue handbook containing an introduction to the center and a health certificate valid for one year. Blood and gynecology examinations were on the last page and marked as supplemental materials.

The reporter was also able to obtain the certificate in card form for 100 yuan. The card showed the reporter's personal information as well as a barcode.

With the two certificates in hand, the reporter began visiting housekeeping companies in Chaoyang to apply for work as babysitter. The first company said it required a Hepatitis B test. When the reporter said she didn't take the exam, the hospital checked the certificate and informed her it was included in the basic exam.

A second company only checked the first page that explained the registration process. A third company only asked if the reporter had a health certificate but never asked to see it.

The reporter called other companies. Most said they required a Hepatitis B test and would accept either a certificate or card. None would explain how they authenticated certificates.

There is no way to validate a health certificate online. The only way to check is to visit the examination center that issued the certificate. Cards can be checked online using the barcode and number on the back.

The reporter's 100-yuan health card did not pass the online check.

The Beijing Homemaking Service Association said it does not recommend which certificate its member companies use.

The Beijing Municipal Commission of Health and Family Planning said that individual housekeeping services are not considered a public health service, so there is no requirement. ■



Villagers Send Injured Elephant to National Park

A young Asian elephant accidentally entered a villager's home in Yunnan province. The villager was reportedly very frightened by its presence, but soon realized the elephant was young and injured.

The elephant has been sent to Yexiang, a nearby national park. According to caretakers, the elephant is too weak to drink water. It is being fed sheep's milk because the mother has not been located.

A veterinarian who examined the animal said it might have a congenital heart defect and digestive disorder. Eight staff members at Yexiang are taking care of the elephant full time. It is still in a critical situation.

(Tencent)

Disabled Courier Sends More than 100 Packages Per Day

Li Hongjun, a Chengdu native, lost his right leg in an accident when he was 17. In 2012, he opened a courier office in the city's Longquanyi district and hired two employees to deliver parcels. One of the workers quit in May and left Li short on workers.

Undeterred by his disability, Li took on the task of delivering parcels himself. His story touched many nearby residents, who saved their parcel for him to increase his business.

Since his story appeared in local media, many have praised Li's work ethic. "I work hard because I don't want to be worthless," he told reporters.

(Tencent)

Ground Collapses in Front of Marriage Office

A massive sinkhole appeared in front of the Marriage Registration Office of Yizhang, Hunan province on Aug. 19. The giant pit is reported to have swallowed a tricycle.

Staff at the office said they noticed the giant pit when they arrived for work and they were not sure if anyone was injured. No one was in the pit with the tricycle when they arrived.

Because the incident occurred the day before this year's Qixi Festival, popularly known as Chinese Valentine's Day, many Internet joked about the accident likening marriage to a pit that will swallow you.

A netizen by the name of Bianshui Hepan said the giant hole was a sign that God didn't want lovebirds to enjoy the day.

(Tencent)

Stewardess Faces Suspension for Weight Gain

A stewardess on Qingdao Airlines might be suspended on account of her weight. The airline said that although it sets limits on how much its stewardesses are allowed to weigh, it is "not accurate to say a stewardess may be suspended from flying or fired for gaining too much weight."

A spokesperson for the company said Qingdao Airlines is slightly stricter about the figures of its stewardesses than other airlines. Heavier stewardesses may have problems when emergency occurs, the company said.

(The Paper.cn)

Parking Spaces Beat Housing for Cost in Beijing

BY DIAO DIAO

Beijing's housing prices have grown infamously faster than its salaries during the past decade. But the cost of parking has grown even more.

A Guangzhou newspaper recently stunned readers by announcing the city's most expensive parking space cost 100,000 yuan. In Beijing, the average space cost between 150,000 to 200,000 yuan in 2010.

Prices have risen 70 percent since then.

In high-end communities such as Wanliu Shuyuan near Bagou, Haidian district, the 70-year property rights to a parking space cost 700,000 to 800,000 yuan. In Zhonghai Fuyuan, a high-end community on Zengguang Road inside West Third Ring, a standard parking space costs 600,000 yuan.

Most parking spaces have more than doubled in cost during the last five years. Some with 50-year property rights cost 450,000 yuan.



CFP Photos

Homes in the Xishan Yihao Yuan cost 60,000 yuan per square meter. A parking space, which is ten square meters in size, costs 800,000 yuan.

Most people choose to rent their parking space rather than purchase it. Rented spaces by the Huamao Center and Fuli City, two high-end communities on East Third Ring, cost 1,000 yuan to 1,200 yuan per month.

Construction may be part of the reason

that parking is so expensive. Most parking spaces in Beijing's communities are underground, and underground construction costs more than other projects.

In the past decade, real estate companies have reduced the number of parking spaces to slash costs. That result has been citywide parking shortages.

Those who can't afford to buy or rent a parking space park their cars on the street.

Matching parking spaces have become an important property when families buy an apartment. Some communities in Tongzhou district are being built with extra underground parking to accommodate families who own more than one car.

The secretary-general of Beijing Real Estate Association said the government would have to issue new regulations to rein in the prices, as it did with real estate during the last decade. ■



CFP Photos

Child Abandonment China's Growing Challenge

BY KARENA HU

The sounds of a crying infant echoed out of a public toilet in Beijing's Qian'er Hutong on Aug. 2.

"The baby's body was already swallowed by the sewage when we arrived," Qian Feng, the head of Tianqiao Police Station and the man who saved the child from the toilet, told the *Beijing Times*. The infant was sent to a local hospital for treatment.

On Aug. 5, another baby boy with several congenital diseases was found abandoned in the woods in Jiangxi province. Police were unable to locate his family and sent the baby to a social welfare institution.

To find two babies discarded in three days is not unusual. China is confronting a growing trend of child abandonment.

"In the 1980s and 1990s there were 5,000 and 50,000 discarded newborns. The number today has really skyrocketed," Ma Xu, a deputy in the National People's Congress, told Sina.com.

Roughly 100,000 Chinese newborns are abandoned by their parents each year, according to the 2010 China Children Welfare Policy Report. Nearly all of the abandoned babies have disabilities or diseases, the China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption said.

"[Child abandonment] is one of the biggest concerns in China nowadays," Ma said.

Solutions

Many in search of a solution have supported baby hatches – drop centers where new parents can abandon their newborns with no questions asked. China's baby hatch system is heavily modeled on "safe havens" found across the US.

The first baby hatch opened in 2011 in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province. Over the next three years, another 32 baby hatches opened in 16 provinces.

Today, all are overflowing with infants.

Guangzhou's baby hatch received 262 babies in the first 50 days after opening in January 2014. Comparatively, Japan's only baby hatch took in 101 babies over seven years.

Adoptions could provide a long-term solution, but the process remains burdened by severe regulations and parents eager to circumvent the system.

Authorities say that "private adoptions," which are carried out among individuals without the state's involvement, are illegal. In Dongguan, Guangdong province, as many as 50 percent of all adoptions occur off the books.

Children adopted outside the system are rarely able to obtain a residence permit or hukou.

Wang, the foster mother of 17-year-old Qianqian (pseudonym), has been trying to obtain a hukou for her daughter for the last decade. Wang's father was asked to look after the

girl at Chengdu Jinsha Bus Station in 1998. Qianqian's birth parents never returned. Wang chose to adopt the baby, even though she already had a 3-year-old son.

In 2005, Wang began a 10-year battle to enforce Qianqian's right to education.

"She stopped going school after 9th grade," Wang told *West China Metropolis Daily*. "The high school told us that without a hukou she could not enroll or take the National College Entrance Exam."

Registered domestic adoptions fell from 37,000 in 2008 to about 19,700 in 2013, according to the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

The Chinese government approved overseas adoptions in 1992, and since then China has become the main source for international adoptions. The US is the largest destination country for adopted children, with 71,632 children being integrated into American families between 1999 and 2013.

But in 2007, China tightened its rules for foreign adoptions, leading to a 71 percent decline in American-Chinese adoptions from 2005 to 2013.

Lax Laws

Child abandonment, as defined by Chinese criminal law, is illegal and is punishable by a fixed-term imprisonment of no more than five years if the circumstances are "flagrant."

"Only circumstances that cause the

baby's death or injury can be termed as 'flagrant,'" said Guan Aiping, a lawyer at Dongsheng Legal Service Office.

Hong Kong has a much lower rate of baby abandonment, partly due to harsh legislation, specialists say. Baby abandonment in Hong Kong is a felony punishable by as many as 10 years of imprisonment. If an infant born in a Hong Kong hospital is diagnosed with health problems, parents are not allowed to take the baby home and stop its treatment. Social welfare organizations support some of the treatment costs.

Another change in legislation that contributed to the rise in China's child abandonment is that pre-marital health tests, meant to screen out inherited diseases, became optional in 2003. Since then, the birth defect rate has swelled from 4 to 6 percent, said Wang Yonghong, a deputy to the National People's Congress.

"Reducing the birth defect rate would help fix the child abandonment issue," Wang told *Modern Express*. But some say it's a matter of morals.

Policy reforms, free lifestyles and rising living standards have led many parents to see babies as disposable personal property, specialists said.

"This disrespect for individuals and life is a sign a society caught in a moral crisis," Professor Tan Chuanbao told *China Youth Daily*. ■

(Karena Hu is an intern at Beijing Today.)



The Fall of China's Top Toothpaste Brand

BY SHU PENGQIAN



CFP Photos

Chinese toothpaste maker Liuzhou LMZ announced it ran an 89.6 million yuan deficit during the first six months of 2015 on Aug. 18.

The company has been expanding its business into new areas in recent years. However, its main business – toothpaste – brought in 69.9 million yuan, which accounted for only 10.7 percent of its gross earnings.

Once a household name in China, Liuzhou appears to be collapsing and losing its presence in the Chinese toothpaste market.

Prosperity to Decline

Best known for its LMZ Herbal Toothpaste, Liuzhou was the third most popular toothpaste in the Chinese market during the last two decades. At its peak, the company sold more than 500 million tubes of toothpaste. In 2006, its toothpaste sales reached 312

million yuan.

But Liuzhou has entered a downward spiral. Its toothpaste is no longer in the Top 10. Few advertisements for its products appear on TV, and its classic slogans have been forgotten.

In supermarket and retail stores, Crest, Colgate, Darlie, Yunnan Baiyao and Zhonghua occupy about 75 percent of the market: LMZ Herbal Toothpaste accounts for less than 1 percent.

"When I came to a hotel and saw a tube of LMZ toothpaste among the disposable supplies, I was surprised to find the brand was still alive," a netizen Da Lanyang (pseudonym) wrote on Jiemian.com.

Analysts have been quick to pin Liuzhou's failure on a poor development strategy.

"An attempt to diversify its operations is what sent Liuzhou LMZ rolling downhill," Chang Yizhi, a researcher at CIConsulting Agency, told the *Changjiang Times*.

The company seized China by blending popular herbal medicine into its toothpaste formula. But the herbal gimmick has not withstood competition from domestic and foreign brands.

Liuzhou began looking into other fields rather than reinvent its core product.

From 2004 to 2006, Liuzhou began exploring the medical business. In 2007, it expanded into real estate and began synthesizing sucralose, a sugar-free sweetener.

The company further diversified when Ma Chaomei, chairman of the board, came to power in 2008. Ma led the company into the paper industry and imports and exports.

Three-year sales records suggest all these efforts were wasted.

In 2012, the company's net profits decreased 80 million yuan. Its papermaking business lost 53 million yuan, and its real estate business only profited 2.82 million yuan.

Liuzhou's deficit swelled to 109 million yuan in 2013. In 2014, its sucralose business lost 36.1 million yuan, and its papermaking business ran a 75.5 million yuan deficit.

The continuous deficits forced Liuzhou to sell all its interests in CITIC Securities.

The company has sold stock five times in the last five years, and on July 2 the shareholders passed yet another proposal to sell stock.

"Liuzhou LMZ is bringing more trouble for itself," an insider who did not want to be named said. "It should not have chosen to diversify from the beginning."

During its previous boom, Liuzhou had a group of loyal consumers, rich experience in operating a toothpaste business and substantial market influence. Although its sales took a hit from other brands, it could have stressed its advantages to come out ahead.

Its toothpaste business experience did not transfer into its attempts at real estate, medicine and papermaking, where it had to build reputation and influence from nothing.

"Liuzhou LMZ put too much of its money and energy into unfamiliar fields and neglected the development of toothpaste business," Chang said.

In fact, diversified business operations are a risk for any company. If the company has too little capital and too little preparation, it can easily become trapped.

Wahaha and Li Ning are classic examples.

Wahaha had its start in the beverage business and rose to become China's most famous beverage producer. It then expanded into other fields such as children's clothes, foods and liquor. Its gross earnings never increased with that diversification: in 2014, Wahaha's total sales fell 7 percent to 72.8 billion yuan.

Li Ning's expansion into athletic wear, sneakers and sports accessories caused it to report losses three years in a row.

Liuzhou, Wahaha and Li Ning all suffer from the same problem: the lack of a clear business direction.

Yunnan Baiyao, which stuck to its core business and developed new toothpaste products for the market, has now become one of China's top five toothpaste brands.

Reforms

Liuzhou has realized the problems with its diversification and attempted to make a change in 2013. That was the year Zhong Chunbin took power from Ma Chaomei and began changing the company's strategy.

Zhong reduced Liuzhou's oral care products, cleaning products, travel supplies, paper products, medical products, chemical products, papermaking products and real estate business into five key sections. The consolidation narrowed the company's scattered business operations and brought its capital and energy together.

In addition, he began to invest in entertainment circles to boost the company's popularity. Liuzhou sponsored popular reality shows like *Running Man* and TV series such as *Cruel Romance*. It also hired actor Zhang Jiayi as a spokesperson to win over young consumers.

Although Liuzhou is confident the changes will be effective, insiders in the toothpaste industry say the battle is already lost.

"The domestic toothpaste market has reached a saturated stage. Price competition is fiercer than ever, and it's hard to change consumers' habits in the choice of toothpaste," Chang said. ■

Top Schools Brawl Over Student Recruitment

BY YANG SHUANGTING

It's that time of the year: Peking or Tsinghua? The few students lucky enough to ponder this question are among the nation's top high school graduates.

Every year, after the *gaokao*, or the National College Entrance Exams, Peking University and Tsinghua University recruiters scramble to secure applications from the nation's top scorers.

This year's bickering between the schools erupted into a brief online brawl, with both universities firing caustic Weibo remarks that purported to expose each other's "dirty recruiting tactics."

Peking sparked the feud with a Weibo comment that implied that Tsinghua was poaching its potential students on June 29.

In its post, Peking said that Tsinghua's admissions team called every Top 10 student from the Humanities or Mathematics who chose Peking, saying that the school cheated them and would not grant their desired major.

Tsinghua itself has frequently defaulted on its promised majors during the past five years, Peking's Sichuan regional admissions team wrote.

Tsinghua's Sichuan admissions team quickly fired back, "Brother, aren't you worried about corrupting little kids with your bribes?" The implication was that Peking offered cash to secure top students. Peking responded by dropping the surnames of 2014 graduates who it claimed

had received cash bribes from Tsinghua.

Both schools suddenly purged the comments from their accounts, leaving a bewildered public to discuss the repercussions of the events.

Responses ranged from disappointment to anger.

"With such educators, how does our nation have hope? Everyone has become so mercenary even – famous universities, famous teachers, students and everyday people," an anonymous commentator wrote in one highly liked reply.

But the murmurs did not die down after the messages were deleted.

It's important to understand the critical junction that China's National College Entrance Exams represent. The exams have their roots in the *zhuangyuan* culture. Since the Tang dynasty (AD 622), such tests have compelled aspiring scholars nationwide to prove their academic excellence and personal integrity. The best student of the year, the *zhuangyuan*, would earn a royal title and enter the emperor's palace as an administrative official.

Besides serving as a standing symbol of meritocracy, *zhuangyuan* culture has become effective propaganda for selective universities' admissions processes. The word carries considerable weight in both academia and society.

"Consider applying to Peking University. Last year's Hebei province *zhuangyuan* majored in Agricultural Busi-

ness here," one promotional post said.

The Peking-Tsinghua argument reveals friction in the nation's *zhuangyuan* recruitment process.

Despite the tug-of-war between the two schools to secure *zhuangyuan* students, data shows that Peking is winning. From 1977-2014, 784 of China's top graduates chose Peking. Tsinghua trails with 618.

Fudan University, ranked number five in 2015, received only 55 top graduates within the same time span.

Such an unequal distribution of resources to a handful of universities may also be unfair to lower-tier schools.

Truly understanding China's *zhuangyuan* culture is impossible without taking a look at its implications.

Although not impossible, it's hard to be a top student if one has to walk 10 miles to school and cook for four siblings. In spite of its achievements, the system provides poor or nonexistent higher-education chances for most high school seniors – especially those from poor socioeconomic backgrounds.

Moreover, only graduates from nationally ranked top high schools generally get to attend these selective universities. In 2014 the Affiliated High School of Peking University had 28 graduates who enrolled at Peking University and 10 who enrolled at Tsinghua.

More than 60 percent of China's high school graduates are heading for univer-

sity, an increase of 20 percent since the 1980s, the *New York Times* reported. As a result, the country's number of higher-education institutions has increased from 1,022 to 2,263 in only one decade, *The Economist* reported.

But impoverished rural high school students are falling between the cracks during this growth. Most attend underfunded schools and are instructed by poorly qualified teachers. Universities' recent emphasis on "holistic admissions" also creates a barrier for rural students who have fair grades but who lack training in foreign languages and fine arts.

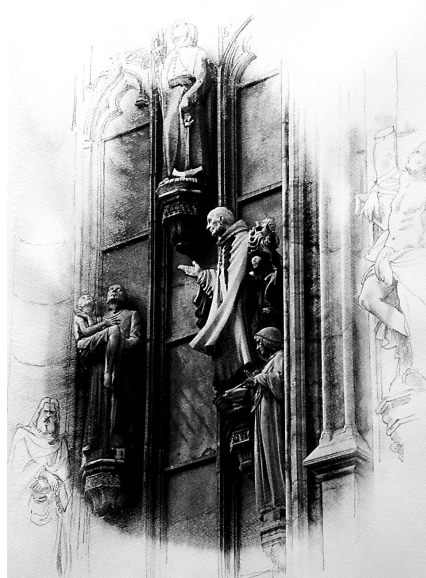
Health problems also affect rural residents, with as many as 40 percent of China's rural children suffering from anemia. According to Scott Rozelle, co-director of the Rural Education Action Project at Stanford University, prevalent disease and non-nutritious lunch programs keep many rural children from reaching the top universities.

In the 1950s, as many as half of Peking University's students came from the countryside. By 1999, only 16.3 percent of its students had a rural background. While there have been no official reports since then, experts believe the rural students account for less than 1 percent of the student body at top schools. ■

(Yang Shuangting is an intern at Beijing Today.)



Photo by CFP



Photography Exhibit Brings Milan into Focus

BY YANG XIN

For those who haven't got the chance to experience the 2015 Milan Expo in person, now is time to take a close look at the Italian city.

The Italian Institute of Culture and Today Art Museum are presenting "Exploring Milan: 100 Shoots from the Expo City and its Surroundings," a photography exhibition featuring more than 90 pictures by renowned Italian photographer Roberto Goffi.

The exhibition not only presents Milan during the Expo period, but also the city in its ancient and modern times.

"It's a journey through Milan and its surroundings, a thorough glance to highlight the thousands of shades of metropolis. A web of stratified mazes makes up any big city and its hinterland. To unravel its intricacies and narrate their stories, we need tracks to follow and keys for interpretation," Goffi said.

Born in 1948 in Turin, Goffi was an

architect before he turned to photography in 1977. Now a well-respected photographer, he is skilled in the discovery and reuse of ancient techniques.

The more than 90 images presented can be separated into four sections: Milan the Ephemeral, Milan the Laborious, Milan the Secretive and Milan's ancient roots.

In the first section, Goffi portrays the contemporary spirit of the Expo, programmatically ephemeral, through cold images on industrial paper and put on aluminum plates.

The other three sections show layers of the past, sometimes recent but always long-lasting. Milan the Laborious looks at the factories and waterways, as well as old buildings and modern re-inventions of the structures that defined the city when it was Europe's economic capital.

Milan the Secretive penetrates into an array of discreet and secluded places,

reflecting the personality of the denizens of Milan, their concreteness, their reluctance towards ostentation and their tendency to hide shy treasures.

The last section investigates the city's ancient origins and is read as shreds of visual poetry, growing soil and origin of everything.

Goffi favors black and white images. Like the color-gradation technique of traditional Chinese paintings, he combines plain colors with the sensitized watercolor paper to accentuate their poetic aspects. Some also contain traces of pencil drawings and hand-coloring.

Poetry is an important part of Goffi's artistic language. By adding lines of poetry to his photographs, he clearly presents their implicit meaning. ■

Today Art Museum

⌚ Through September 8

📍 32 Baiziwang Lu, Chaoyang



Photos by the Italian Institute of Culture

Children Discover Belgian Comics

BY YANG XIN

As a distinct subgroup in the comic history, Belgian comics have exerted a heavy influence on European comic art.

To enhance communications between Belgian comic book writers and Chinese readers, the Wallonia-Brussels Delegation in China, Alliance Francaise de Pekin and French Dargaud Comics invited Turk, author of *Léonard*, to meet young Chinese readers on Aug. 26 at the 2015 Beijing International Book Fair.

Although *Leonard* is less famous than the country's famous Tintin and the Smurfs, it is a favorite of many Chinese children.

The comic is set in the early Renaissance and follows its eponymous inventor Léonard and his assistant Basile. Inspired by Leonardo da Vinci, the character first appeared in 1976 and has been drawn by



Photos by the Wallonia-Brussels Delegation

Turk for more than 30 years.

Léonard is a self-proclaimed genius who lives in a small town and comes up with all sorts of inventions. Most are based on recent, real-world creations such as televisions, fire extinguishers, cars and planes. He also makes more fanciful inven-

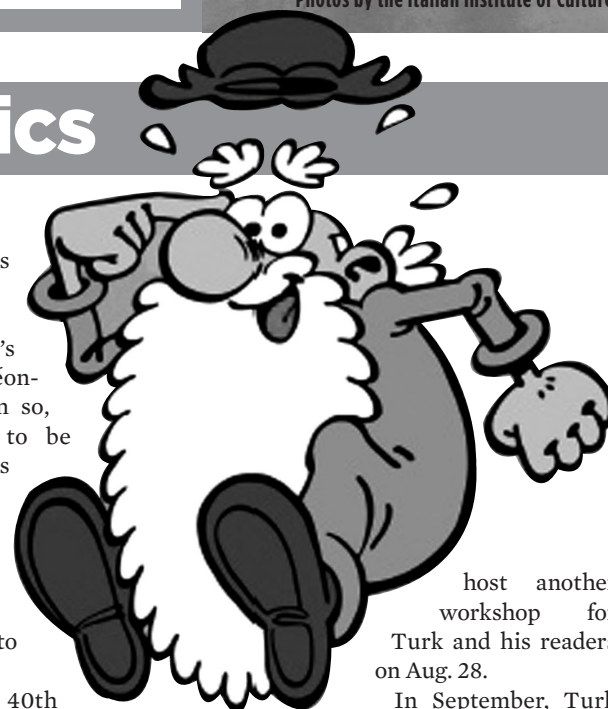
tions such as time machines and robots.

Basile shows the inventor little respect – but it's hard to blame him given Léonard's over-sized ego. Even so, Léonard expects Basile to be enthusiastic about his inventions while Basile ironically repeats his motto, "I serve science, and it's my joy."

The stories are usually short ranging from one to half-a-dozen pages.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of *Léonard's* publication. So far, 45 books and six special issues have been published.

The Alliance Francaise de Pekin will



host another workshop for Turk and his readers on Aug. 28.

In September, Turk will continue to tour in China and meet more young readers in cities such as Tianjin, Jinan, Hangzhou and Guangzhou. ■



Solving Puzzles in Beijing Hutongs



Locals and expats met for a day of exploration and adventure around Houhai on Aug. 23. Hidden City Game teams of two to four participants were given 150 minutes to complete the challenge.

Hidden City Game offers three challenge

levels: Masters, Explorers and Rushers.

Masters participants are expected to have played the game previously. Their questions are more difficult, and they must complete approximately 40 questions and walk 5 to 7 kilometers under strict rules.

Explorers are beginners or players who are not interested in intense competition. They can arrive early and are given an easier set of 25 questions. Explorers can take their time to explore the area, rest or explore nearby temples and sites of interest.

Rushers can arrive late for a fast event. They get the same set of 25 questions as the explorers, yet play without the luxury of time, with a game time lasting 90 to 120 minutes. Explorers and Rushers walk 4 to 5 kilometers.

For this event, participants started at the Shichahai Sport School of Beijing, located in the heart of Beijing on the west bank of Shichahai. The school's alumni include 33 world champions and seven Olympic champions in table tennis, Wushu, chess, gymnastics and badminton.

Teams met to pick up their English and Chinese instructions and questions, and then moved on to begin the event.

Answers to the questions were hidden in nearby areas and historic sites. Participants had to observe carefully along the way to avoid missing important details.

Teams collected points by visiting designated spots and completing tasks, such as kicking a shuttlecock, finding doves, taking photos with tourists and passing laser lights.

Teams who finished all their tasks headed to the terminal in Houhai Park, handed in their answer sheets and waited for the judges to announce the winners.

The best teams won a trophy and eight prizes from sponsors. The total value of these prizes was 7,000 to 9,000 yuan.

About Hidden City Game

The Hidden City Game has been held six times. It is an event for up to four participants that brings together young Beijing locals, expatriates, friends of expatriates and corporate teams.

Interested players can register and pay for the event online. The cost is 60 yuan per player. Players who pay using WeChat can save 20 percent. ■

(By Shu Pengqian)

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